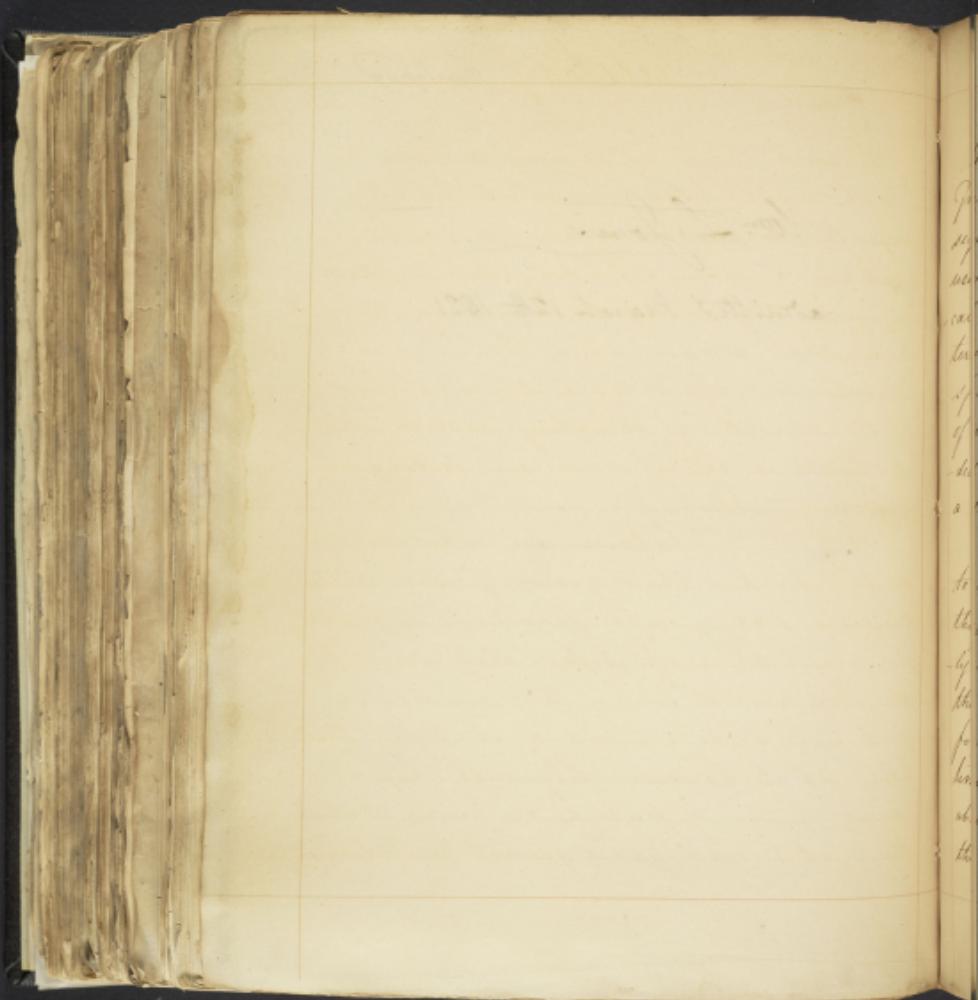


Epitaphy *17

Tom L. Jones

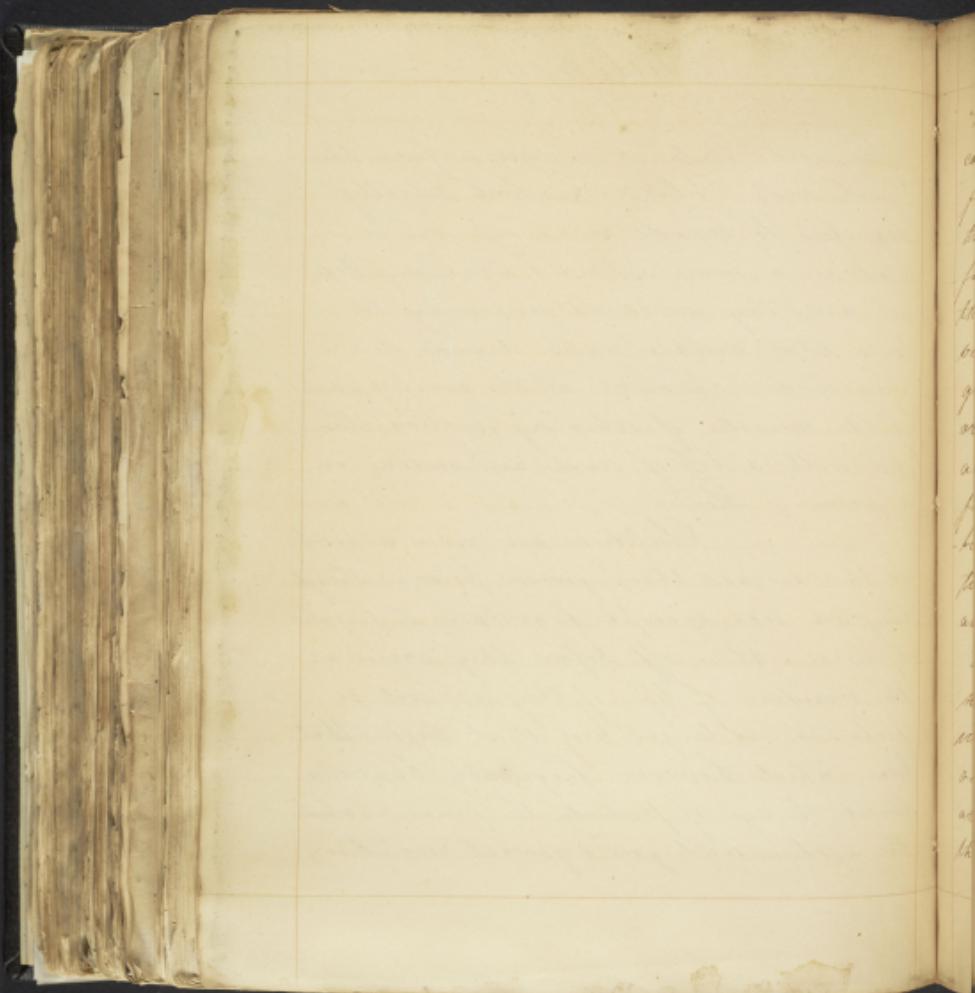
admitted March 12th 1821



Of Epilepsy

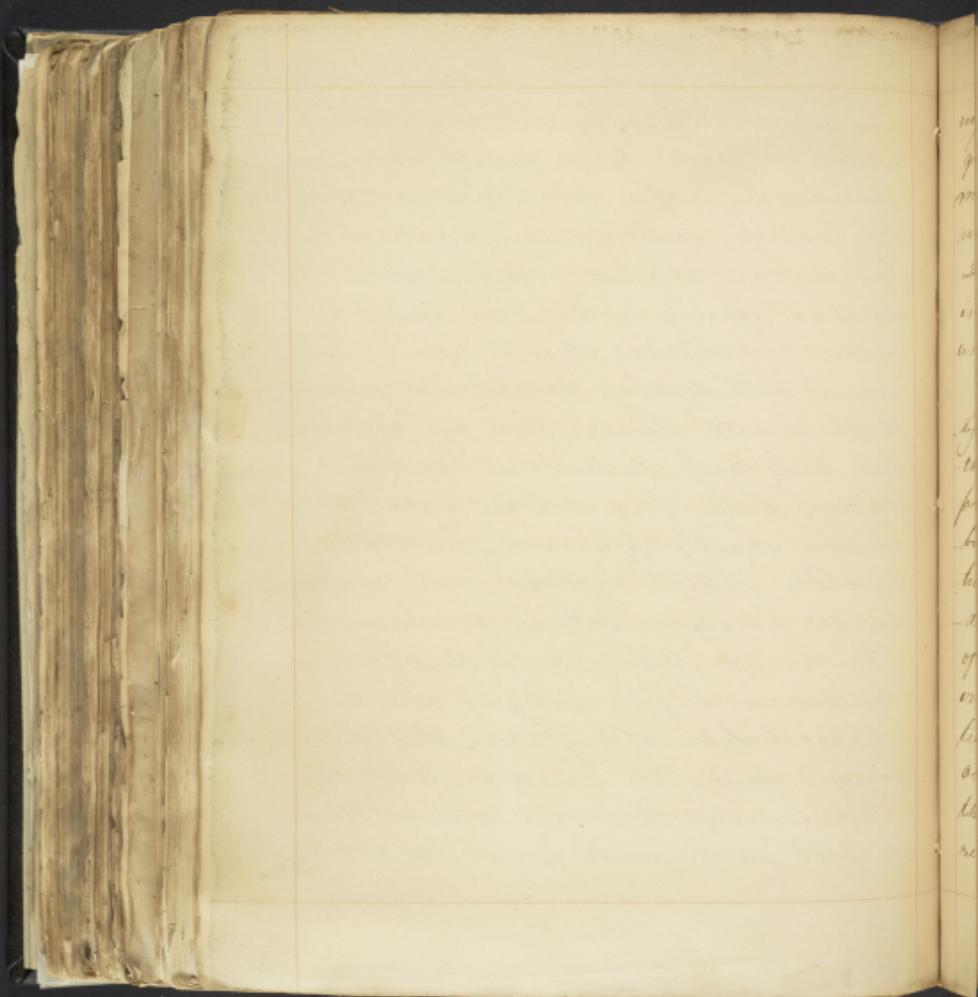
The word Epilepsy is derived from the Greek verb Epilembein, which literally signifies to invade or oppose, but it is used in a more extended sense by Medical men. They intend to convey by the term that disease, which consists of a spasmodic affection of the greater part of the muscles of voluntary motion attended with a loss of sense and ending in a seeming sleep.

Children are more subject to this disease than grown persons though they are not exempt from it, and it frequently carries them off before they arrive at the meridian of life, if they are not so fortunate as to get rid of it before that time, which however frequently happens about the age of puberty, the period at which the system undergoes a general revolution.



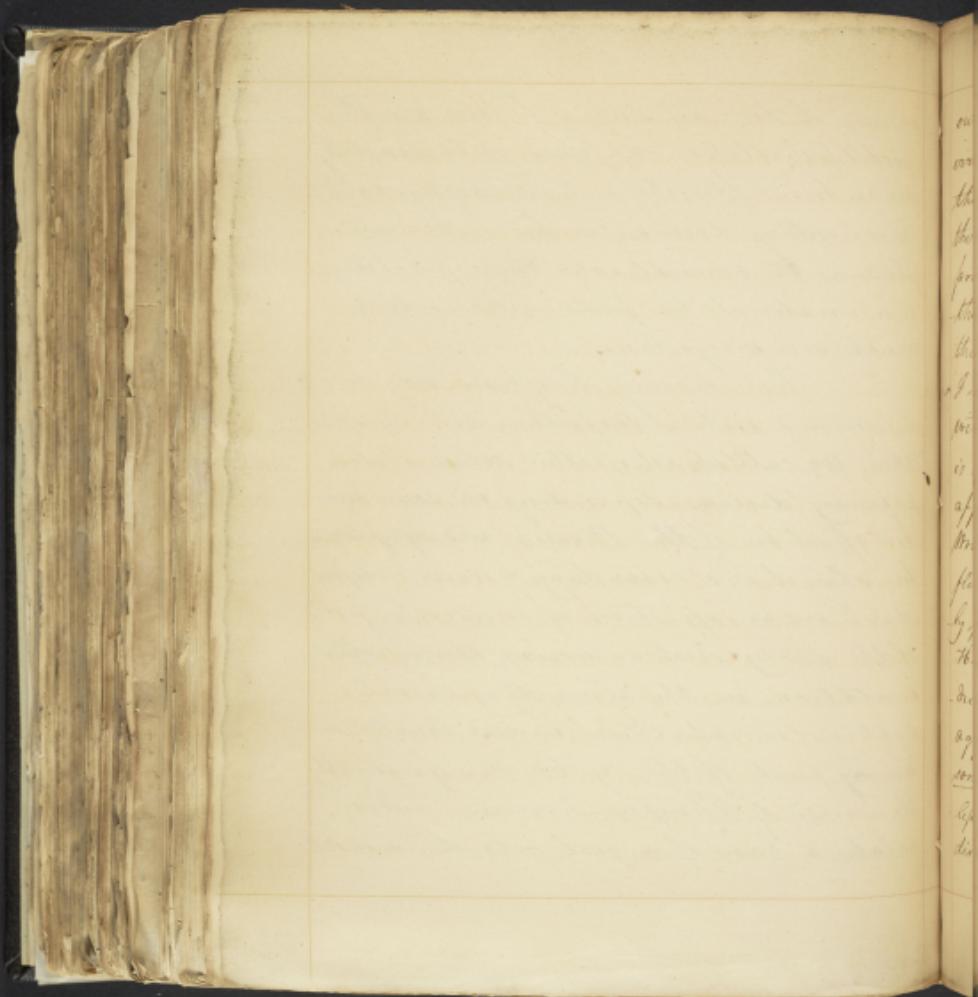
The disease attacks, by fits, very suddenly, coming on without the person's having any foreknowledge of it. But this is not always the case, for some persons immediately before they are attacked, have a giddiness in the Head, roaring in the ears, dimness of vision &c, and are then thrown to the ground with violent convulsions, foaming at the mouth, clenched fists, eyes rolling and hideously distorted; in short the features of the face exhibit a most horrible and ghastly appearance. In a short time the patient becomes more composed and the paroxysm ends in a swooning fit.

The spasms abating, he gradually recovers his senses, he feels fatigued, and has no recollection of any thing that has occurred during the paroxysm. When the attack is severe, the tongue is thrust between the teeth, and frequently receives no little

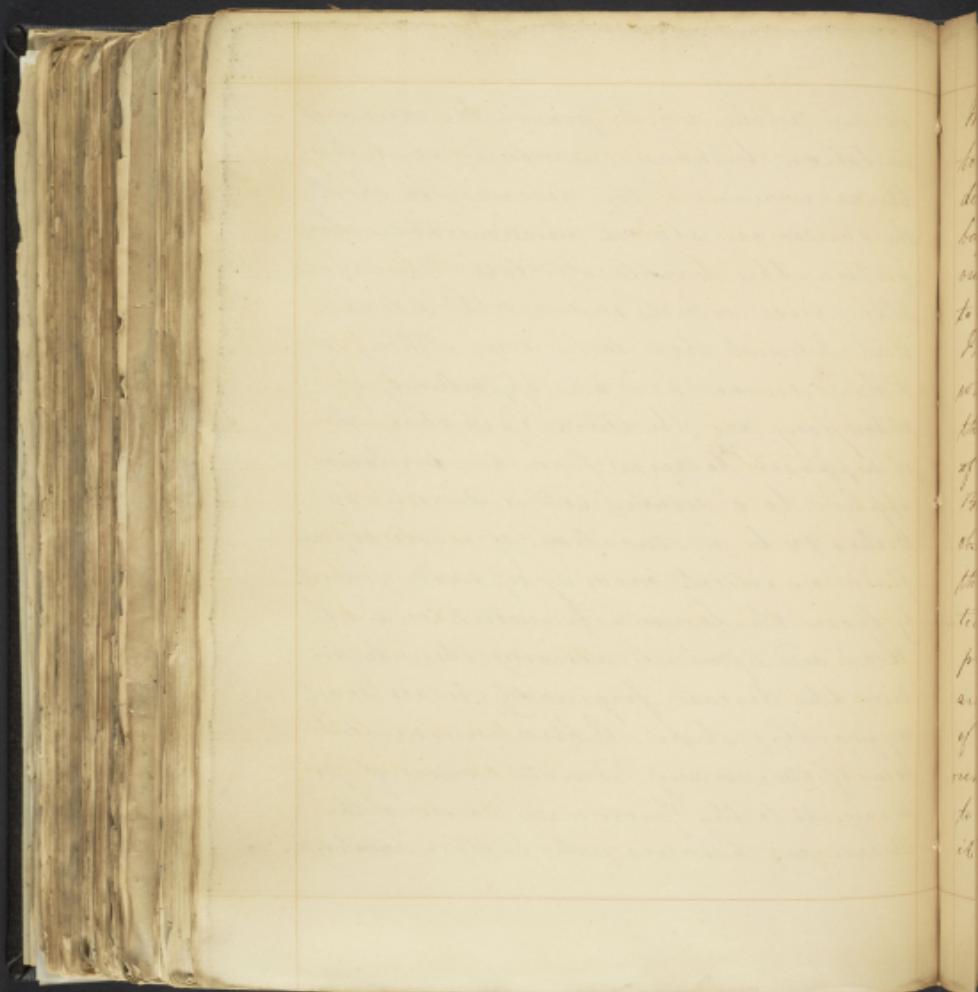


injury, he loses all sense of feeling and the greatest irritation applied will scarcely make him flinch, and not unfrequently involuntarily discharges his excrements. During the convulsions the respiration is unnatural, the pulse quicker than usual and irregular.

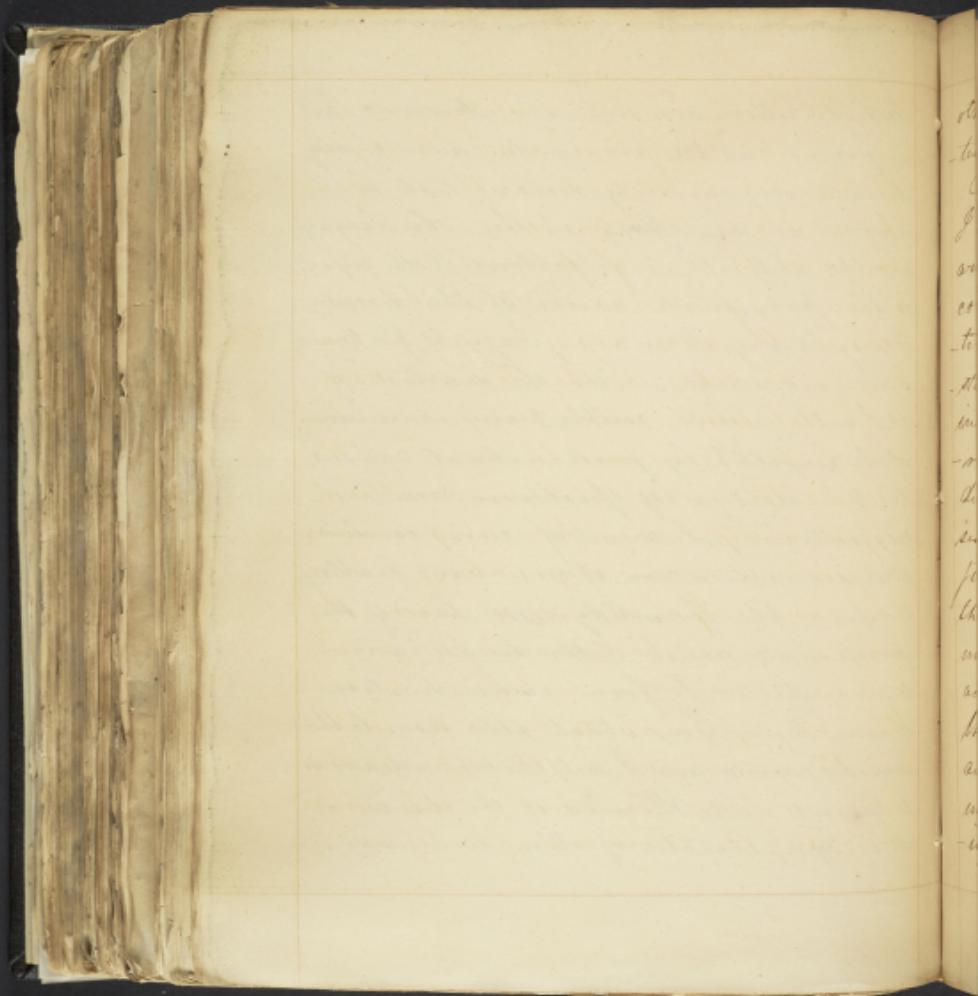
This disease has been very correctly divided into Idiopathic and Syphilitic; we call it idiopathic when it is a primary disease, depending on some morbid affection of the Brains, and symptoms less when it is a secondary disease or dependent on an affection of some other part of the Body, such as worms or any other irritation in the alimentary canal, nothing in children, indeed irritation in any part of the system, are frequently the cause of Epilepsy. Darried, I believe relates a case of a girl who had a wart



ow her ankles which proved the source of irritation, being removed obviated the recurrence of the disease. In short the causes are almost innumerable which produce this terrible affection. There is another cause which induces the disease, that I must not look over although I have never had an opportunity of witnessing any. the Aura Epileptica. It is supposed to arise from an irritation applied to a nerve, and is described by Brister to be a sensation of a cold vapour fluid, or insect moving upwards generally from the lower extremities toward the Head, and upon its arriving there to produce the disease frequently, in its most aggravated shape. I have enumerated some of the many remote causes of Epilepsy, as to the proximate cause of the disease we have no satisfactory knowledge.

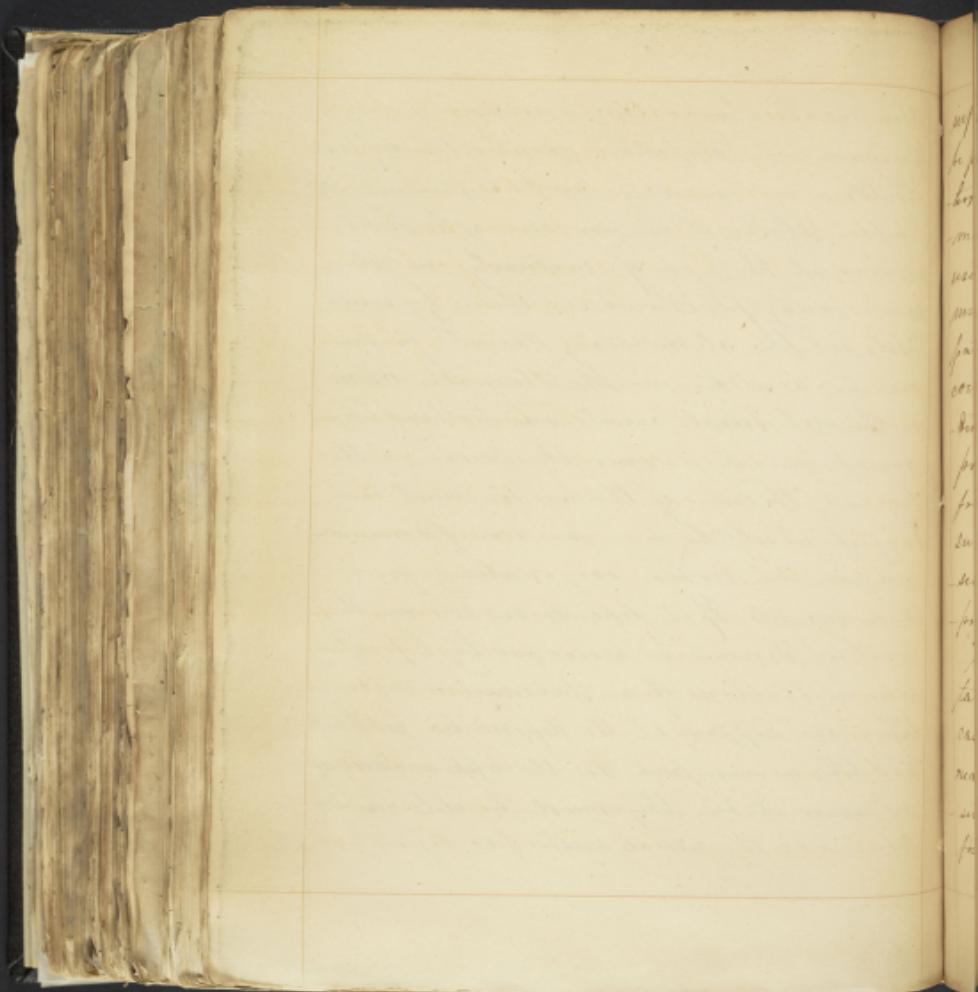


Indeed Cullen himself who strives so hard to point out the proximate cause of every disease, very candidly declares that he is baffled in his efforts at this. His language on the subject is as follows. With respect to the proximate cause of this disease, I might say it is an energy of the Brain, which, ordinarily under the direction of the will, is here, without any concurrence of its, impelled by preternatural causes. But I could go no further. From these observations we must of course conclude, that no indication of cure can be attempted from the knowledge we have of the proximate cause of the disease, and we are compelled to form our indications of cure by paying strict attention to the remote causes, and I will, upon endeavour to point out the cure of the disease as it is symptomatic of other diseases or now



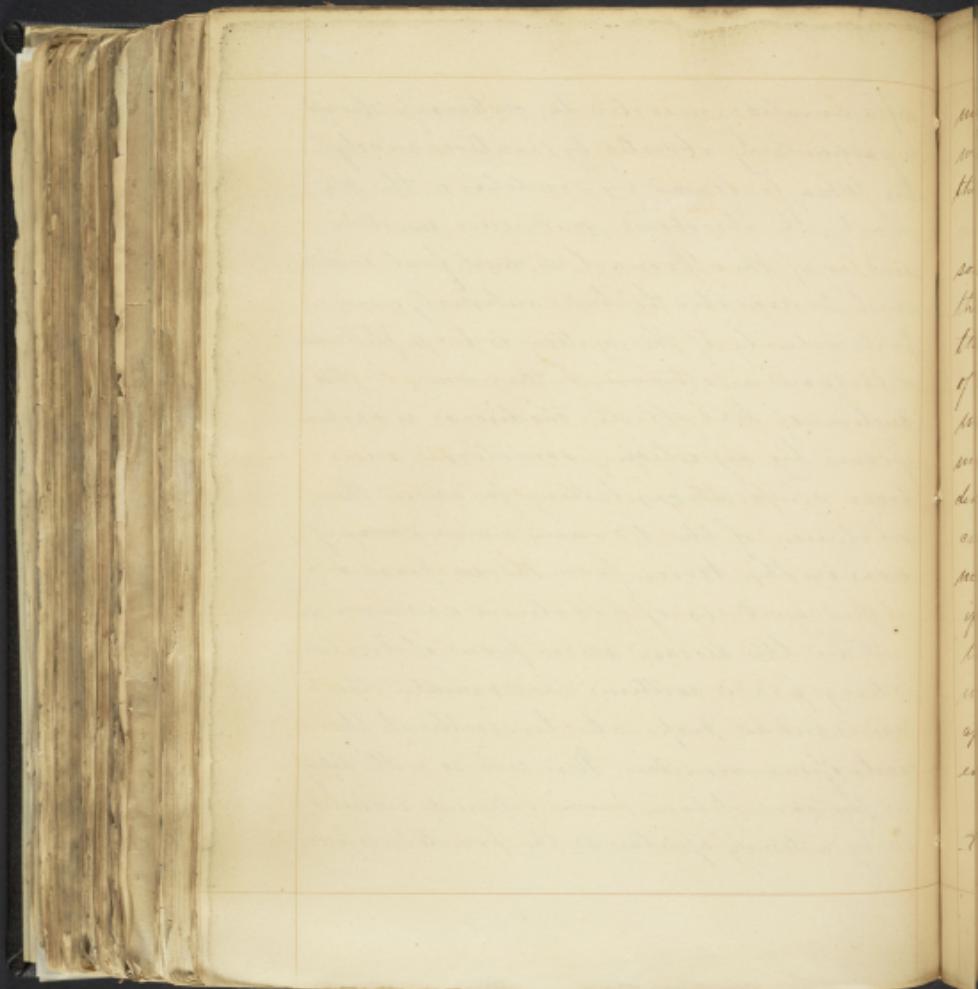
other words Sympathetic Epilepsy, and of
towards the Idiopathic form of the complaint.

Children are more liable to the disease, as
I before stated, than persons who have
arrived at the age of maturity, and it is
commonly produced in them, by irrita-
tions in the alimentary canal, for in-
stance, acidity in the Stomach, worms
in the intestinal canal, and talkings like-
wise frequently from the source of the
disease. The cure of the disease must easily
suggest itself to any person of common
judgement, when originating from
those causes. If it depends on worms they
must of course be removed by a proper
administration of anthelmintic medicines,
then we suppose it to depend on talkings
and the gums put on the appearance of
inflammation, they must be cut and sea-
ruped, and the usual means for topical



inflammation resorted to, costiveness should be particularly abated by laxatives and emetics. When produced by crudities in the Stomach, the absorbent medicines must be used, or if the Stomach is much foul, emetics must be resorted to, but cautiously used, particularly, if the system is in a plethoric condition, as otherwise, they may be productive of bad effects. The disease, as has been proved by dissection, sometimes arises from ossifications taking place in the substance of the Brain, making compact snow on the bones, from blood from de-
prived portions of fractured cranium.

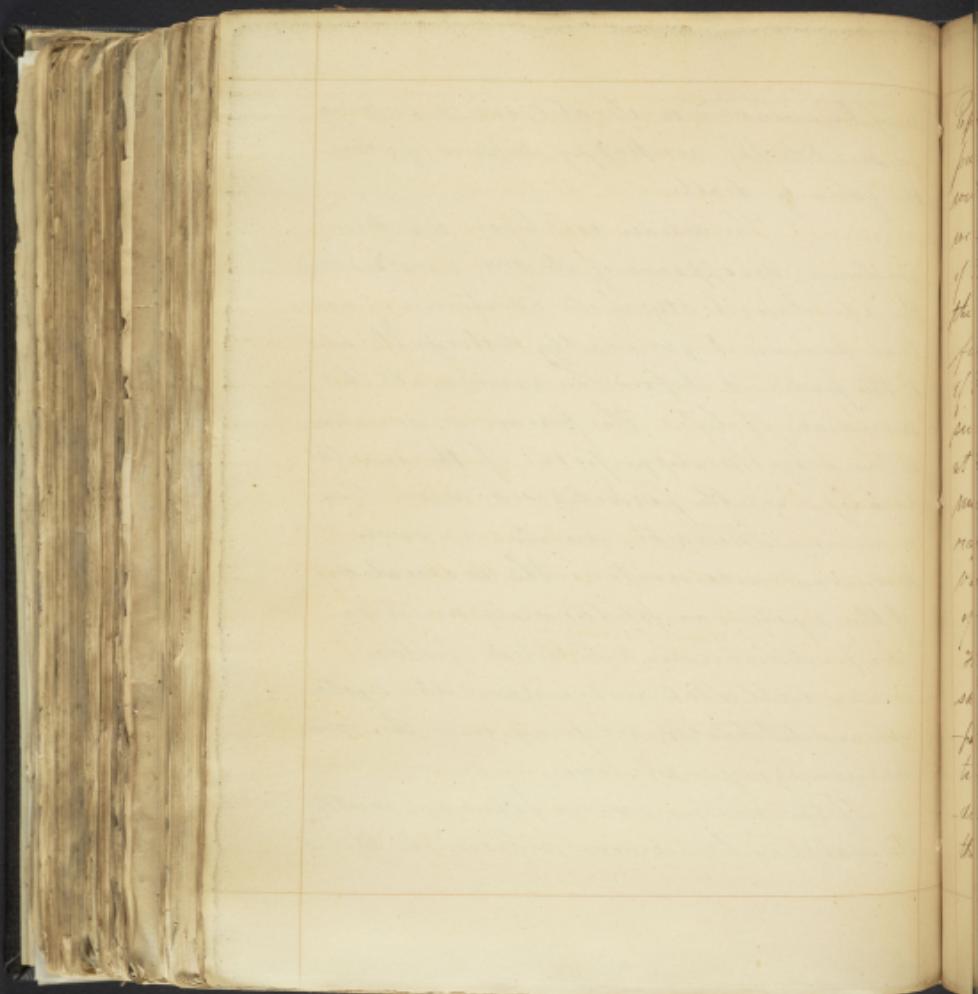
When the disease arises from ossifications taking place within the cranium, the case is indeed desperate, till, throughout the reach of our remedies. It is not so with deprived portions of bone from external injuries, for by a timely application, the fractured pieces



may be removed or elevated, and in so doing we snatch the unhappy sufferer from the jaws of death.

The disease as I before mentioned sometimes disappears of its own accord about the age of puberty: if it continues past that period, it generally destroys the life of the patient before the arrival at the meridian of life. The disease is sometimes induced by the suppression of the monthly discharge in the female sex, under these circumstances, we must use such means as will restore the evacuation of the system is plethora, venereal, the pectorum, cathartics if these means will not restore, and the system appears debilitated, we may use the various emmenagogic medicines.

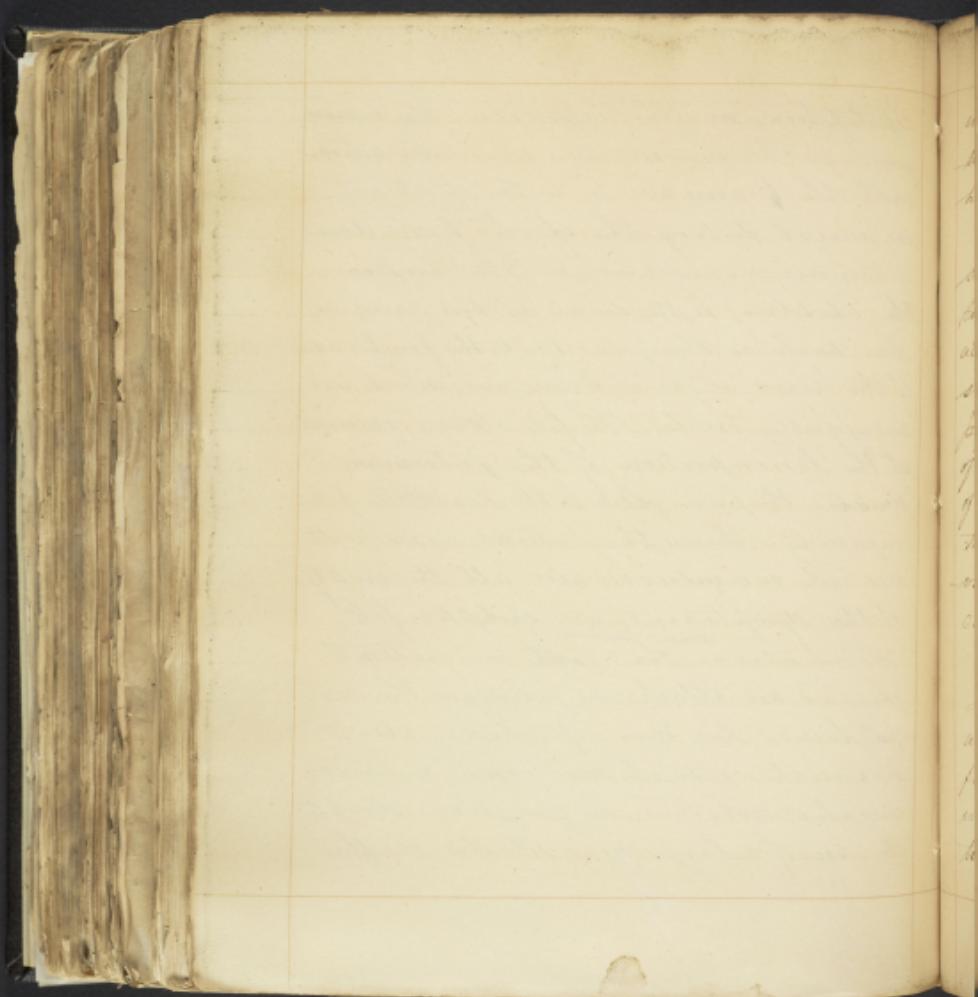
If the disease arises from an irritation applied to a nerve, or from the direct



9

Epileptics, we must prevent the diseased part from having any communication with the brain, and to do this effectually, we must destroy the affected part. A case of this kind is related by Dr. Short in the Edinburgh Medical Essays dated so far back as the year 1730; the first case of the kind, so far as I can find, which was successfully treated. The fit always commenced at the lower portion of the Posterioris muscles, the pain fled to the head with great rapidity, threw the patient down with violent convulsions, and all the rest of the symptoms of an epileptic fit.

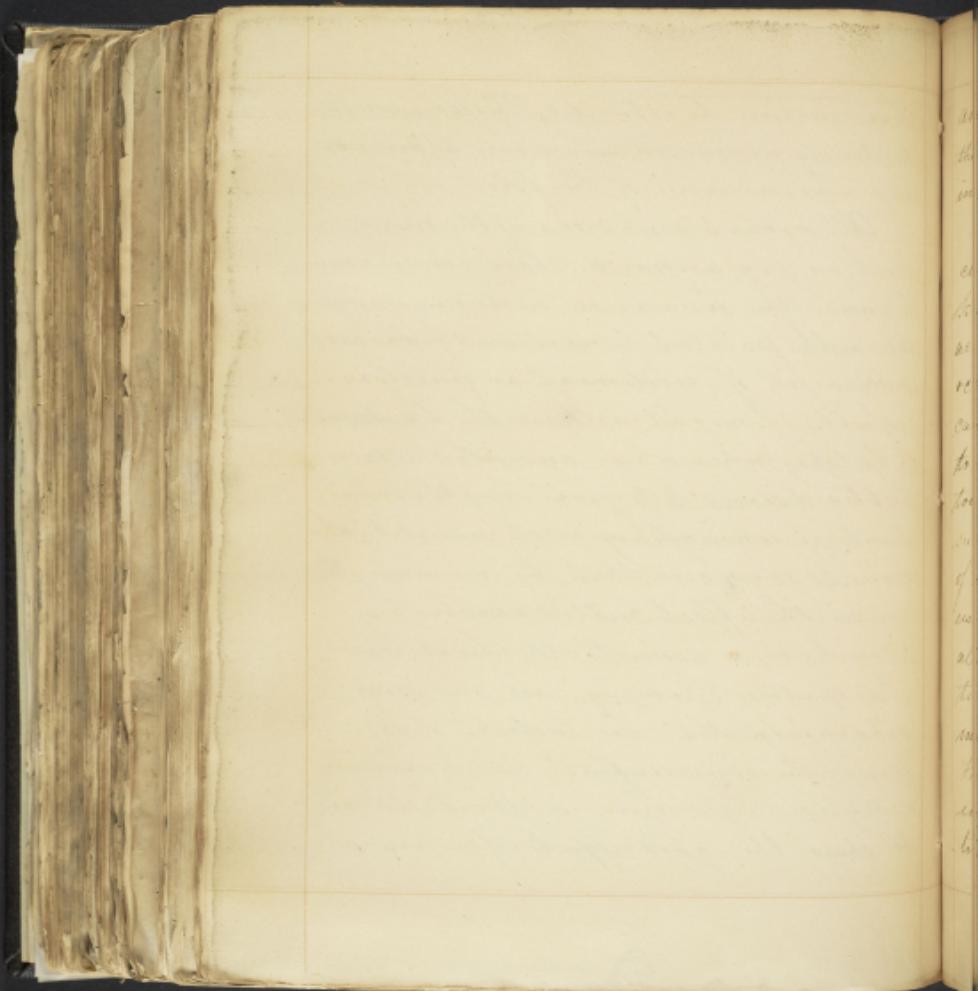
The mentor, ^{which talking} that with his patient she had an attack, he plunged the scalpel into his own epiphysis, about two inches into it, and found a hard indurated substance or ganglion about the size of a large pea, situated on this



nerve which he extracted, the person immediately recovered and never afterwards had a recurrence of the fit.

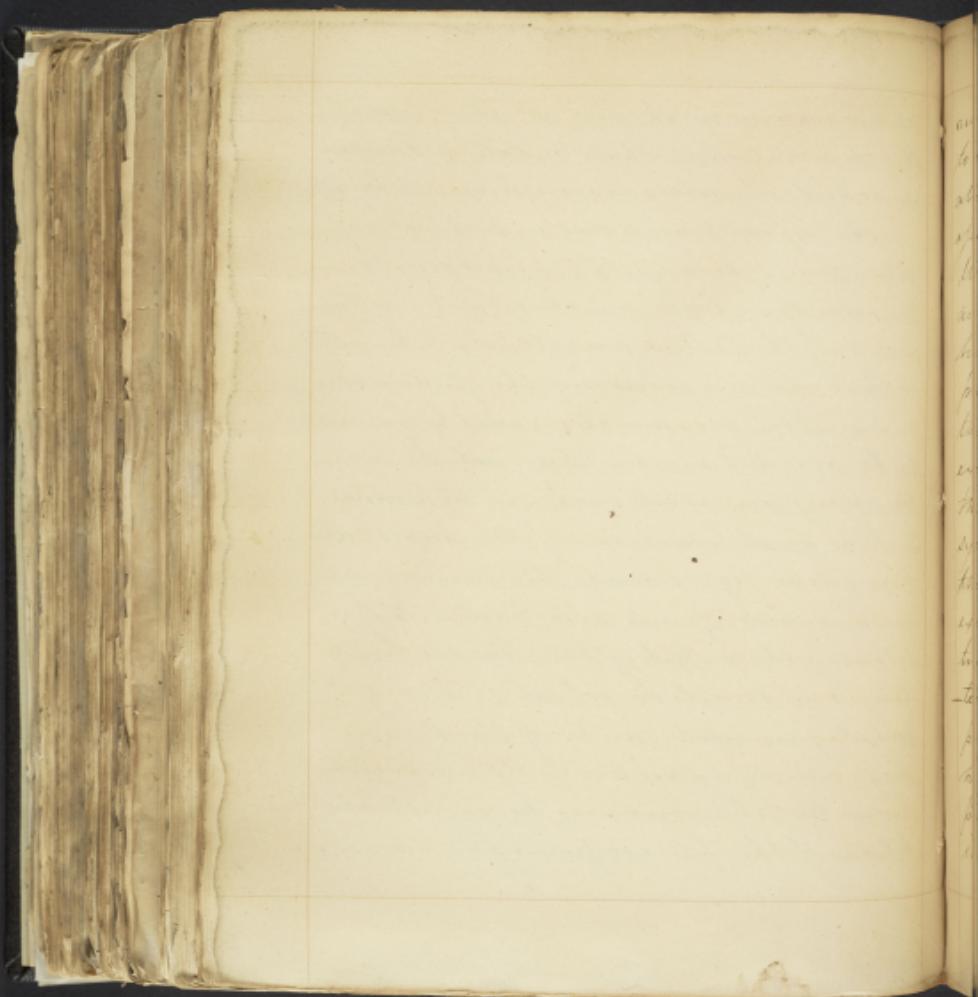
All violent emotions of the mind, such as joy, anger, &c. have been known to cause the disease, in such cases would advise the patient to restrain from such sudden fits of excitement as much as possible. I might extend the treatment of Epilepsy when it is symptomatic of other diseases to a great length, but I think it unnecessary as it must be obvious to every one that by removing the cause the effect will vanish.

I come now to the treatment of Idiopathic Epilepsy and am sorry to acknowledge that our treatment of it, is so frequently unsuccessful. My principal intention in writing on this disease, was to shew the good effects of Cuprum

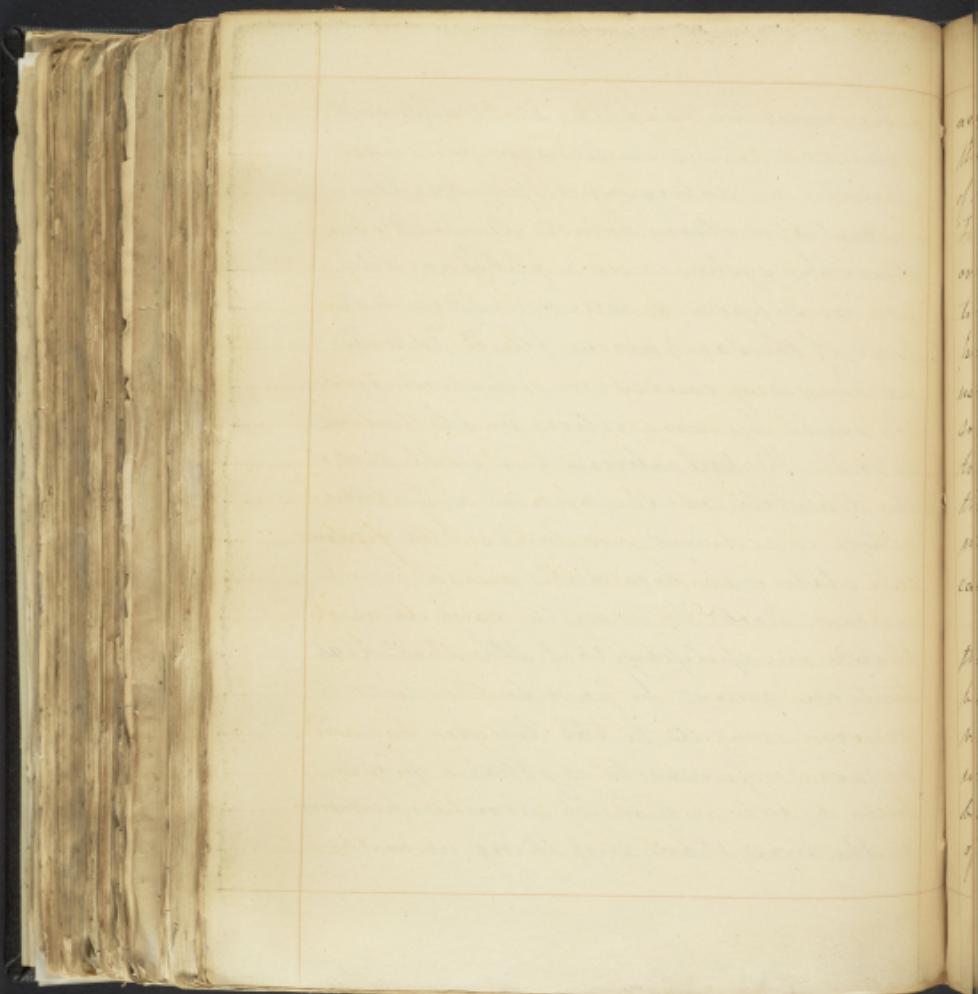


Ammoniacum in it; and at the close of
the disputation, I shall relate a few cases
in which it was administered with success.

As before stated, our indications of
cure must be regulated according to our
knowledge of the remote causes, and then
according to Cullen, consist in avoiding the
occasional, and removing the predisposing
causes; of the occasional causes which are
to be avoided are all those which produce
too strong an excitement on the brain,
such as great emotions of the mind, either
of anger or joy, likewise the immoderate
use of violent spirits, and particularly in
allowing the vessels of the head to become
turgid with blood, which is one of the
most frequent causes of the disease.
These causes, I say are to be avoided by
every possible means, because the ex-
citation of the fits confirms the disease.



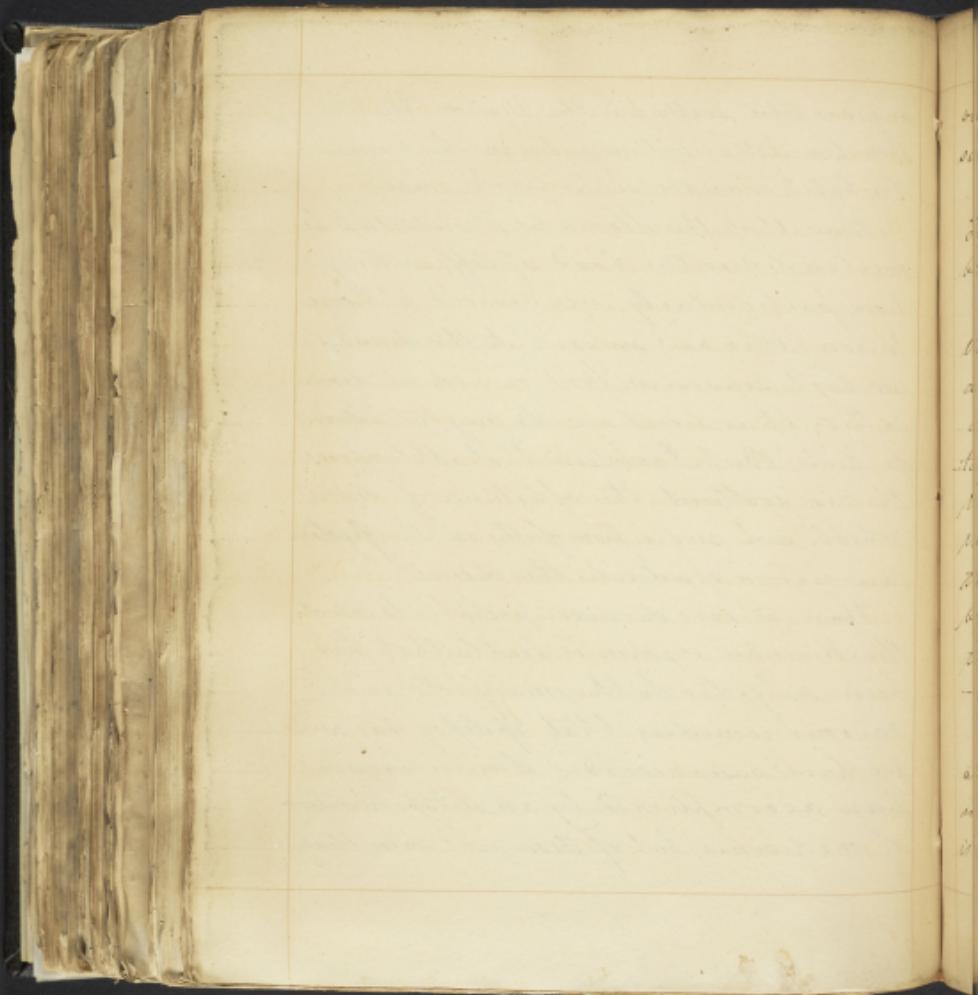
and where this happens it is difficult to remove it, which however must be attempted by destroying, if possible, the associated motion, which keeps it up. When the system is in a plethoric state and we suppose a determination to the head of the sanguinous fluid, to be the predisposing cause, we must remove this cause by venesection in its fullest extent - by purgatives - and by the rest of the depleting measures, and after the system is reduced we must keep it in this state by a low diet, and moderate exercise. Dr. Polhugill says in his treatise on epilepsy, that the greatest attention must be paid to the diet of persons subject to the disease, indeed he goes so far as to say that a proper plan of diet, is of much more importance in the cure, than any thing we are



acquainted with in the Malitia Medica.
Nor the Dr. is enthusiastic in his praise
of what I consider such false means -

It is true that the Stomach should not be
overloaded with food of difficult diges-
tion, particularly, nor should plethoric
persons who are subject to the disease
use highly seasoned food or aperient drinks,
so far, it is necessary to pay attention
to diet. But I contend that diet alone
that is, without the assistance of remedies
which act more powerfully on the system,
can never eradicate the disease.

There is one disease, probably to which
the Human system is liable, that has
been subjected to the manifold and
various remedies that Epidemys has, and
we have cases recorded of such having
been accomplished by an indefinite number
of medicines, but of these, not more than

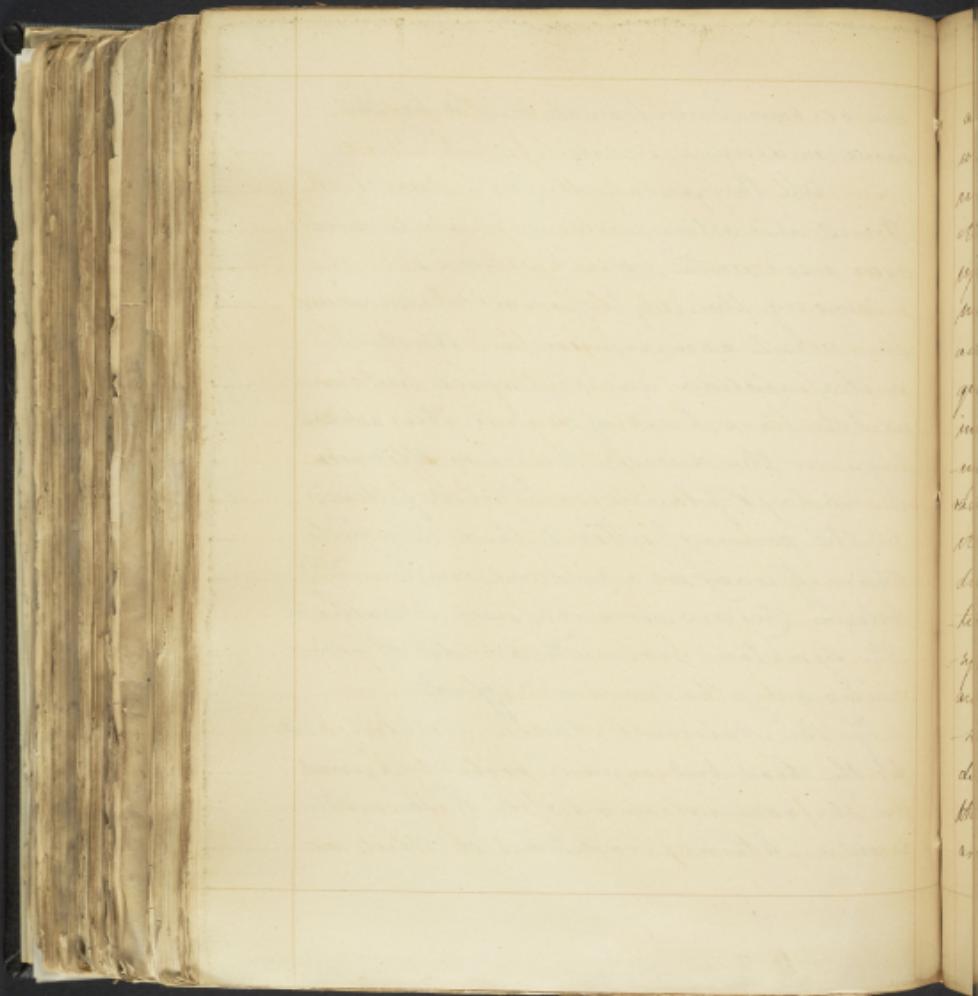


one or two successfully treated by the same medicine.

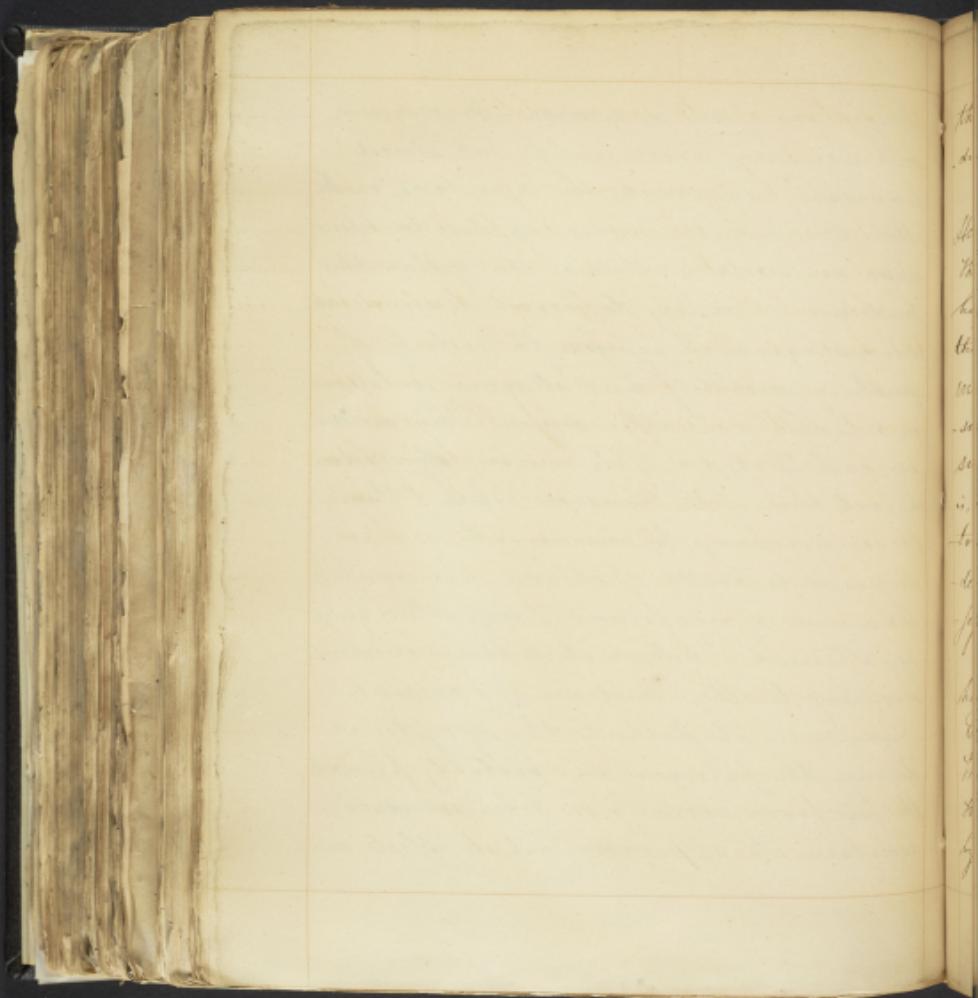
All the anti-pamodic, narcotic, tonic, and astringent medicines have been used with varied success -

Among the anti-pamodic medicines the most conspicuous are the mustard and asafoetida, each of which are reported to have been of considerable advantage in the disease. But practitioners nowadays place very little confidence in the powers of either of them, as regards their efficacy in a radical cure, and I believe they are now only used to palliate the symptoms, not with an idea of producing any permanent effect.

Of the Narcotics, Opium certainly stands at the head, but requires some judgement in the administration of it. If the patient is in a plethoric constitution, or there are



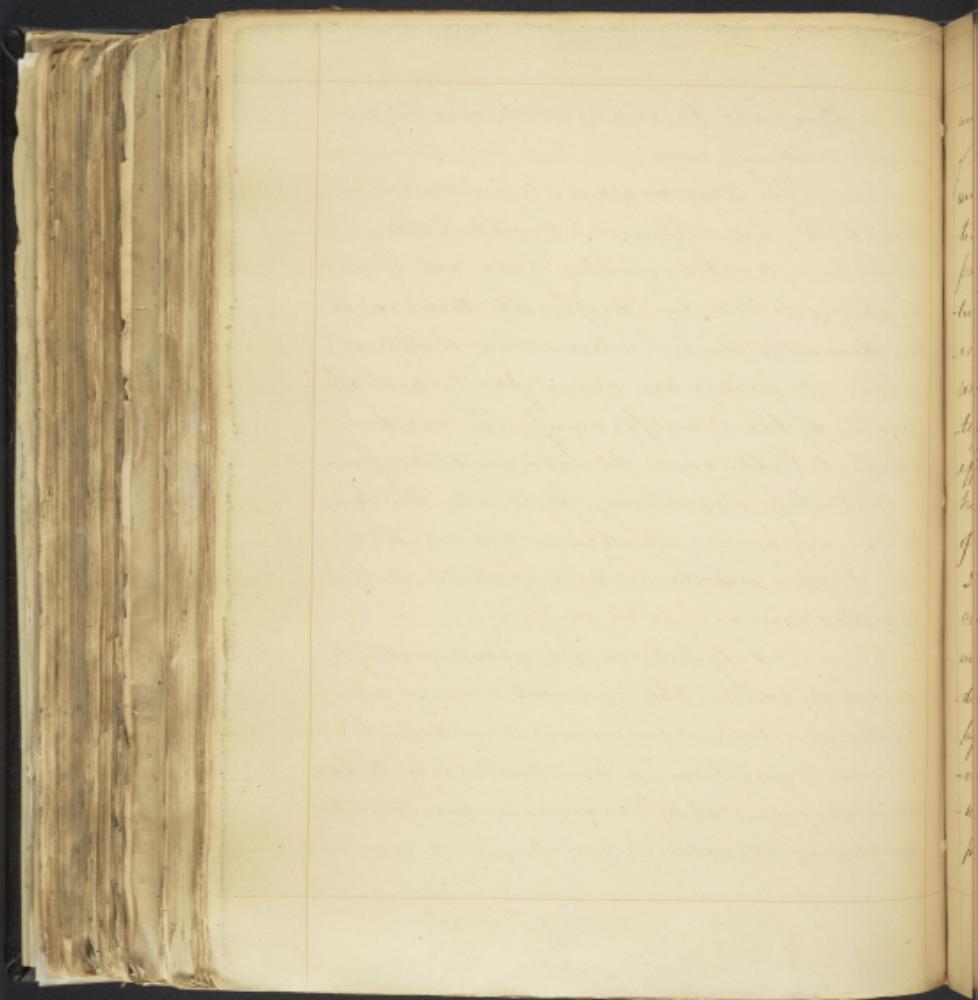
any signs of inflammation, the medicine will not only prove useless, but almost invariably aggravate the symptoms, on the other hand if the disease appears to depend upon an irritable state of the system, the medicine is likely to prove of considerable advantage, as it possesses the property of quieting, mobility, and allaying irritation in a highly valuable degree; there are many cases recorded of its having effected a radical cure of the disease, which I think it unnecessary to enumerate, as I am disposed to doubt of its ever having effected a cure of confirmed Hydrocephalus glauco-^{sy}, although I believe it to be an excellent auxiliary to other medicines, I certainly have seen it palliate the symptoms during the paroxysm, and probably prevent the fit from coming on when we could ascertain its approach, but its effects on



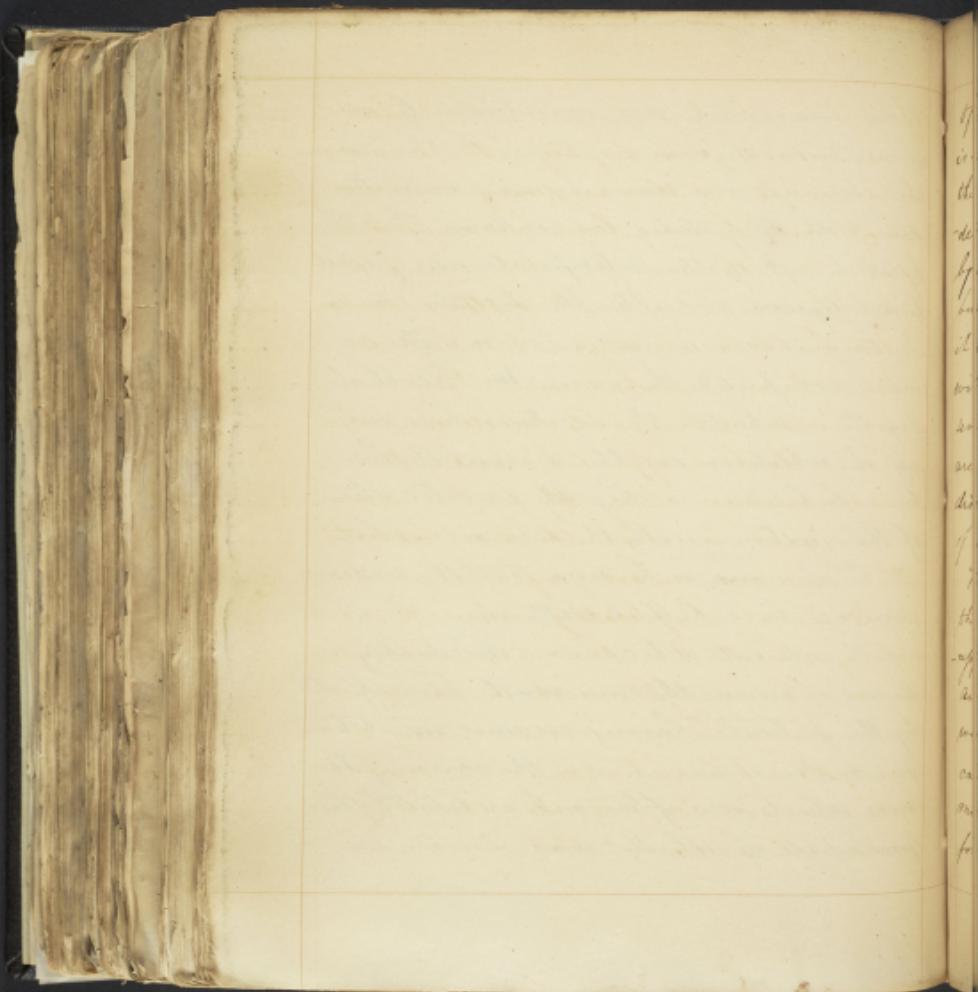
the system are to evanescent, & not to produce a radical cure.

The *Hippocrateus* Tiger or Black Star bane, the different Night shades, the *Picula* or Kimlock, have all been highly extolled, by different writers, on the disease; But I believe the minds of medicat men are more pretty well assurred of their inefficacy. The most I suspect that can be said in their favor is, that they sometimes palliate the symptoms, and render the disease less violent, but I dare not say whether some of them except off set this power.

Digitalis is likewise reported to have been administered with success in epilepsy. A case of a cure is related in Dr. Thomas' practice, under the Head of Mania. He informs us, that the mania was preceded by strong epileptic fits, of frequent recurrence.

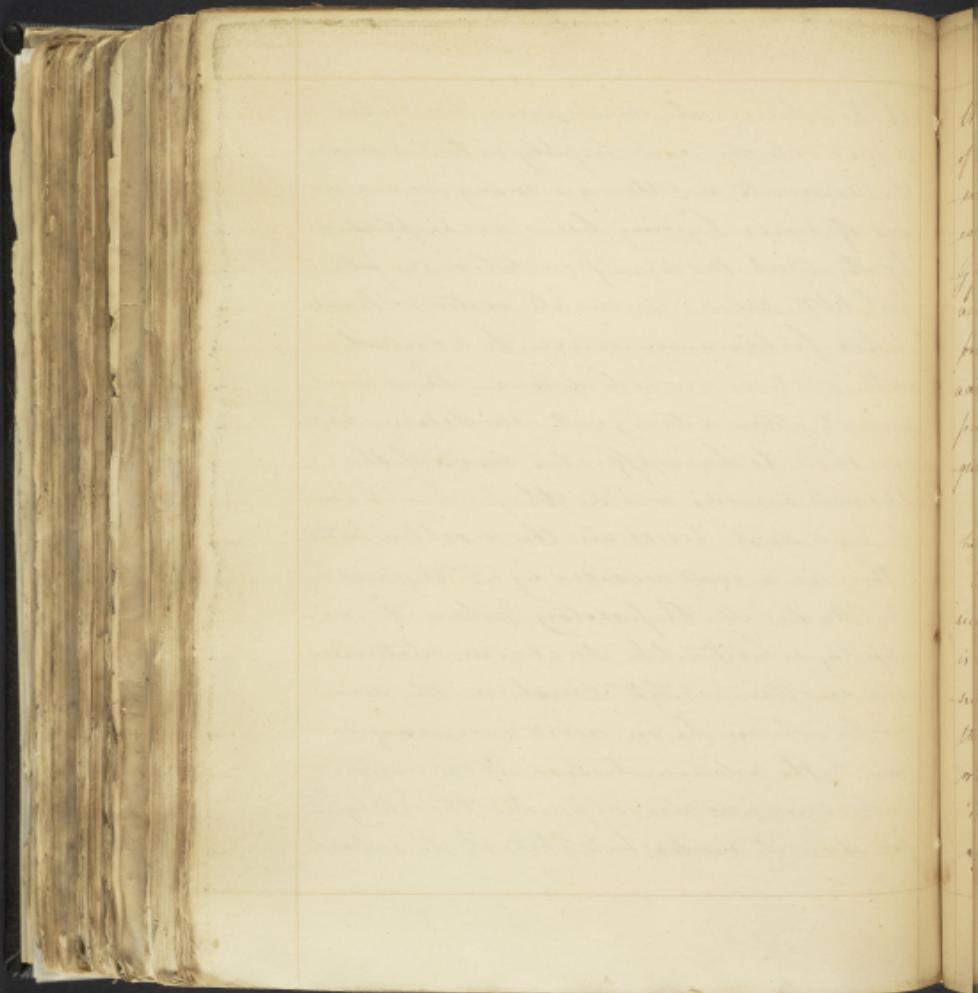


and induced by a long and intermitting use
of spirituous liquors, and that both the Malaria
and epilepsy were cured by an administra-
tion of the Digitalis, but continues, that the
patient left off the intermitting use of spiritu-
ous liquors, and after the Digitalis was dis-
continued, commenced a course of Tonics
which completed the cure. — For I doubt al-
together, whether the Digitalis had any
effect whatever on the disease. Because,
he exhibited in a highly excited state
of the system, exactly the reverse of what
Dr Chapman, as he says, that the medicine
cannot be exhibited with any good effect
until arterial action is considerably re-
duced of course the cure must have ^{been} effected
by the patient's having resumed an abstem-
ious mode of living and the course of To-
nics which was afterwards exhibited, the
principal of which was Zinc.



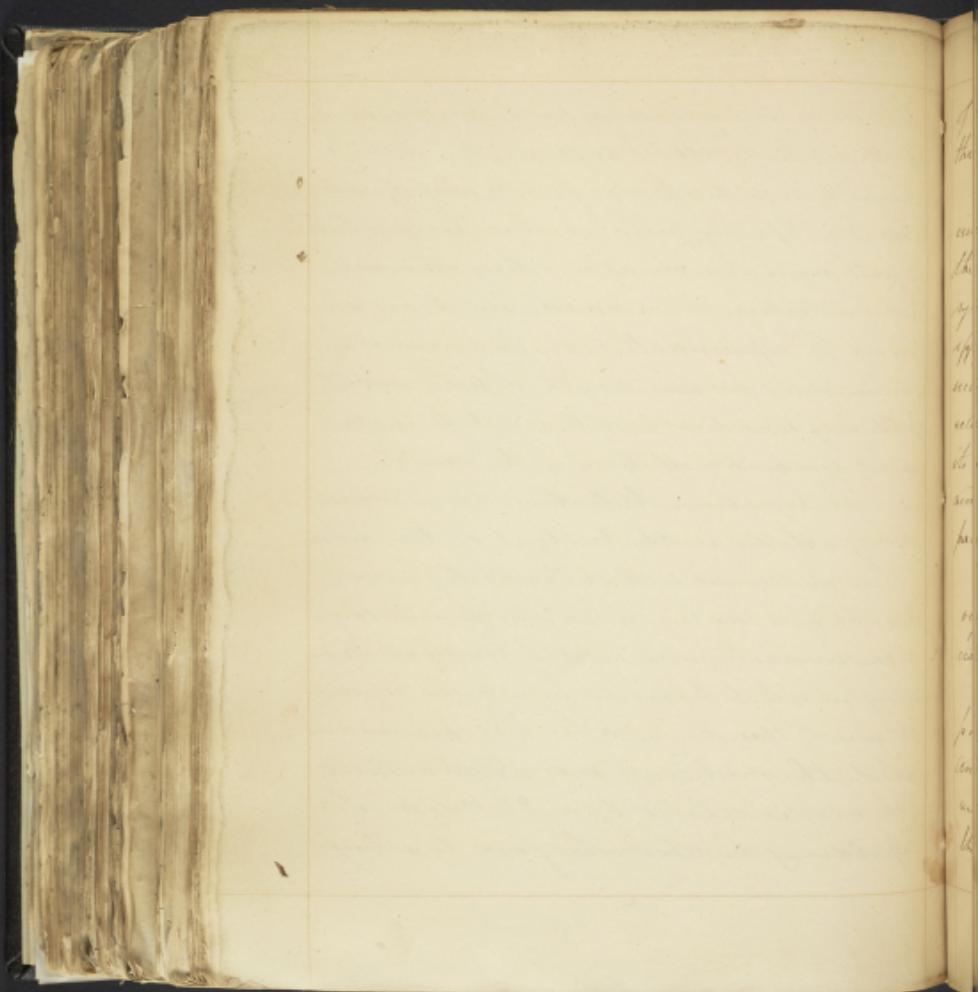
of the Astringent medicines. Mischtoe is one, which was highly esteemed among the Ancients and there are many cases recorded of cures having been accomplished by it. But Modern practitioners place but little reliance on its virtues, thinking it too feeble a medicine to combat with such a violent disease. There are several other astringent medicines which are said to have effected cures of the disease among which the preparations of Lead and Tinc are the most celebrated.

There is a case recorded by Dr Agnew in the Medical Repository, where he has affably exhibited the *Saccharum Sativum*, and another case by Dr Rush in the same work, wherein he succeeded in curing a case by the administration of the same medicine and also suspended the fits by it for several weeks, but that it discontinued



the bowels and ultimately prevented the success
of the remedy. Nor I suspect, there will ge-
nerally be, to be the case, for the cure of a dis-
ease like Epilepsy, when it once becomes fun-
gified, requires a steady and long continued
administration of the remedy, and it has been
proved by experience that the lead cannot be
administered for any length of time, without
producing considerable gastric distress, and fre-
quent spasmodic affections of the bowels -

The Argentum Nitratum has also been
highly esteemed in the treatment of this disease.
There are several well authenticated cases
recorded of its having cured this disease. There
is one in particular in the Medical Repo-
sitory, in which I ascribe in a great measure
the cure of this disease to the bold manumission
which the medicine was administered.
The case is related by a Dr. Wilson of
Spalding, in which he gave to a boy

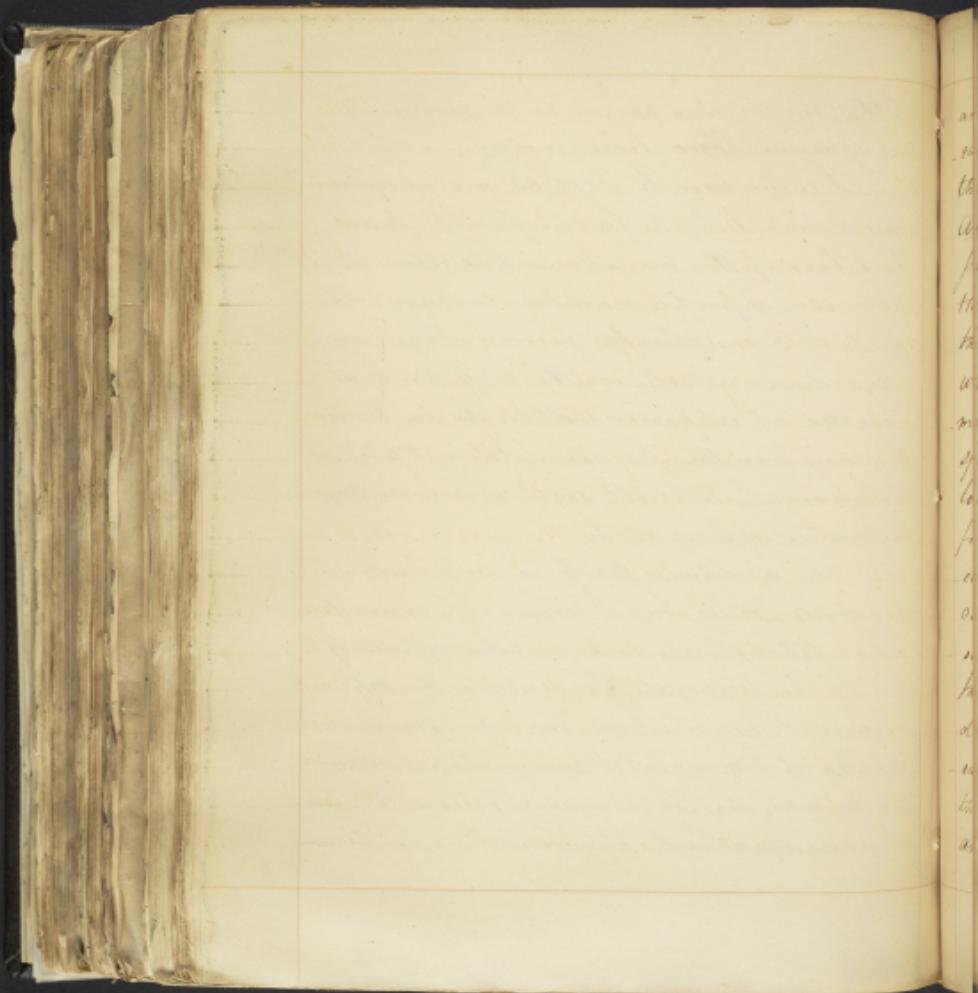


of 10 years old two and a half grains of
the medicine three times a day.

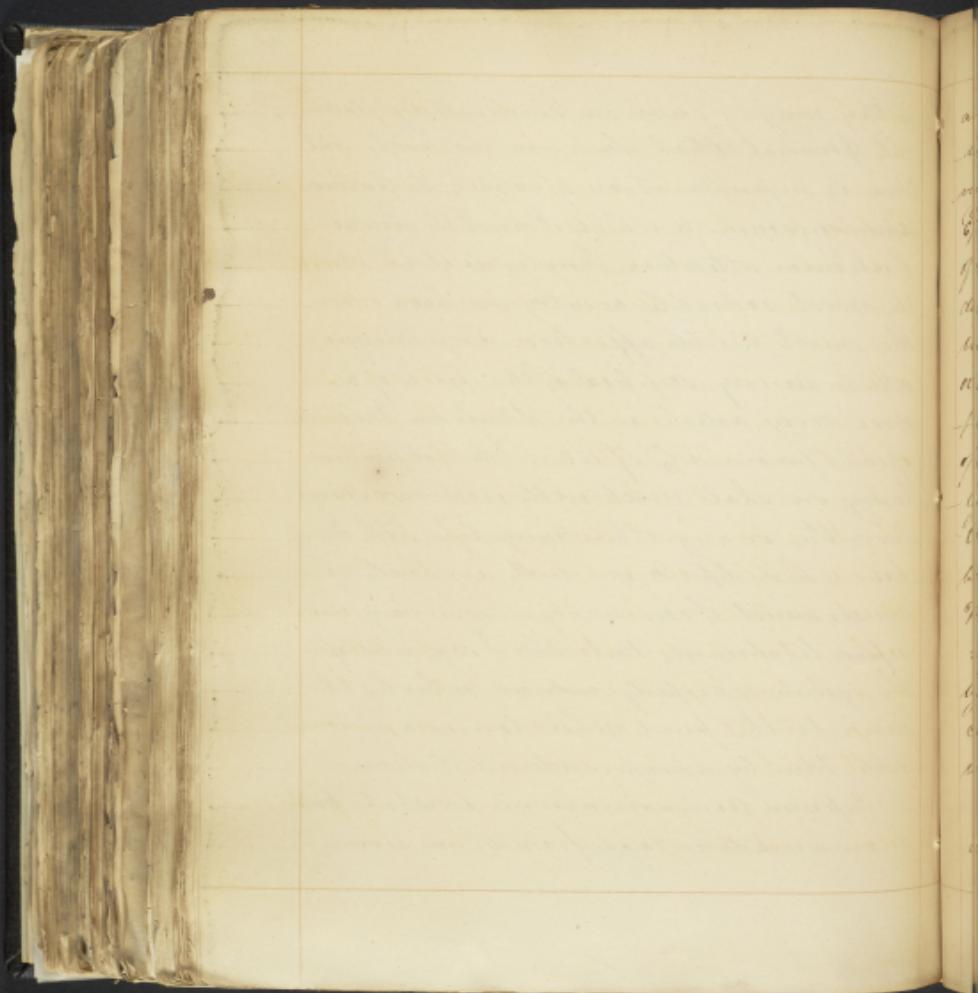
I come now to ^{the} Tonics, a class of medi-
cines which I think far preferable to all
the others, if they are administered when the
system is in a proper condition to receive the
effect, of their valuable powers, almost every
individual article in the class, has been
celebrated at one period or other to have shewn
its sway over the disease, both vegetative
and animal, but the latter I have almost
particular reference to.

The American Bark is one of the best
vegetable tonics, but I believe it is seldom
used, although cures have been effected by it.

Of the animal Tonics all the different
preparations of Hare Liver, Copper, Asafoetida
and Tea if I may except it among those medicines
are so celebrated that it is unsafe for me to relate
the cases, in which they have been found useful.

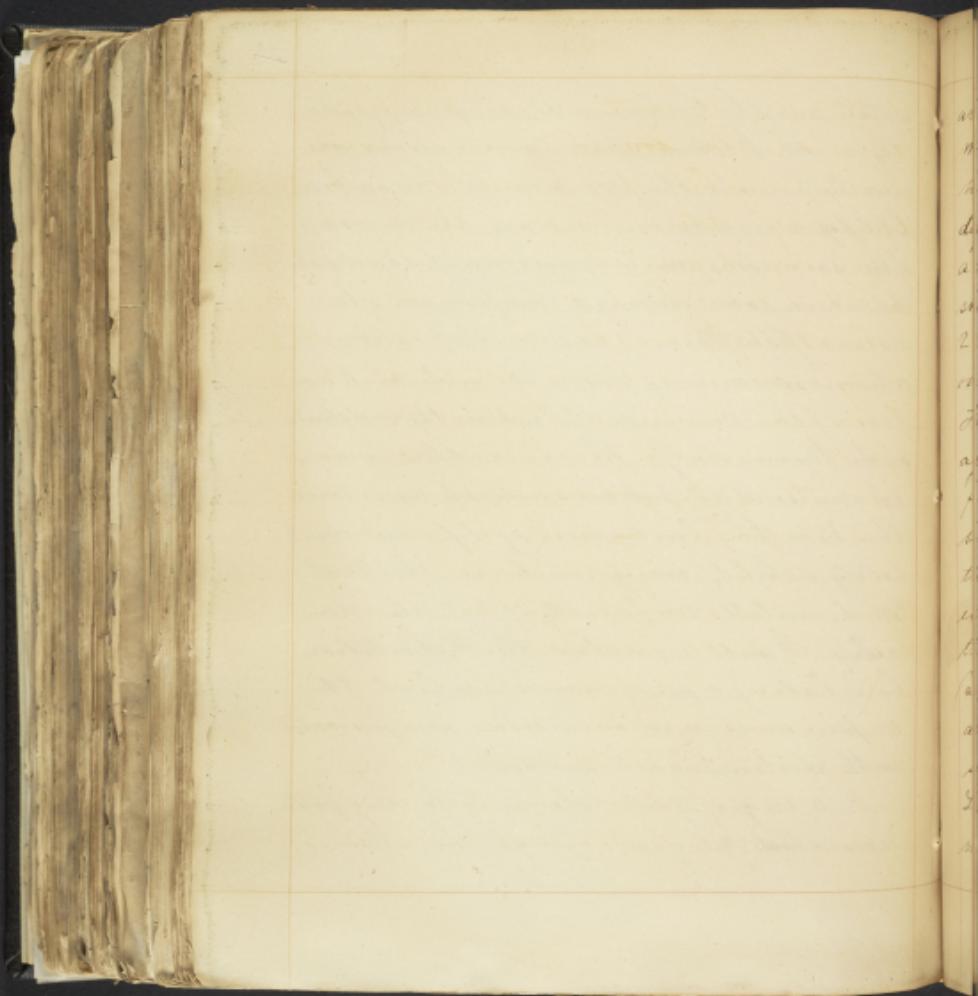


as they may be seen in almost every Medi-
cal Journal that issues from the press but
there is a preparation of copper, the Cuprum
Ammoniacum to which I wish to draw
particular attention. I really do think it is
the most valuable remedy we have over
this most knivil affection. Even Cullen
who is so very sceptical of the effects of al-
most every article in the *Malitia Medicorum*
speaks favourably of this. I do not pretend
to say we shall meet with uniform success
from this, or any other Medicine. The dis-
ease which depends on such a variety of
causes, must of course require a very dis-
tinguished treatment. But, this I say, that after
the system is properly reduced, or brought
down to the point where tonics are indispens-
able, then by a proper administration of
the Cuprum Ammoniacum, we shall derive
as many advantages from it, as from any

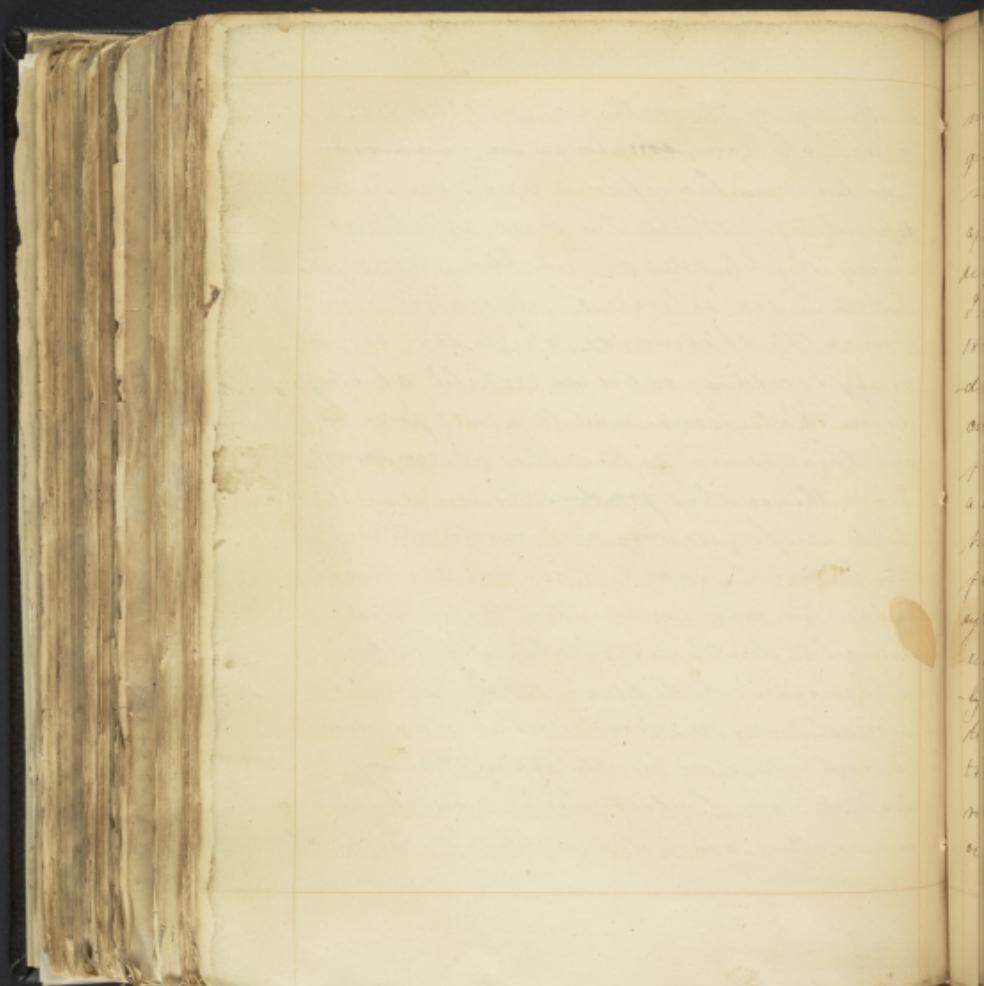


article in the *Pratina Medicina*, and proba-
bly now. I believe that the medicine uni-
versally palliates the symptoms of Idiopathic
Epilepsy and likewise renders the intervals
of the paroxysms much longer, unless the disease
depends on some interhal compression of the
nerves of the Brain, such as opificiales
or tumours arising from the external sur-
face of the Cranium, or within the substance
of the Brain itself. The case is then a hope
less one indeed, but we cannot ascertain
this to be the fact during life, and must
boldly exhibit every article in the *Prat.
Mid.* until we finally, if possible, attain
re lief. I will now close this expectation
by relating a few cases in which the
cuprum ammoniacum was presented
with distinguished success.

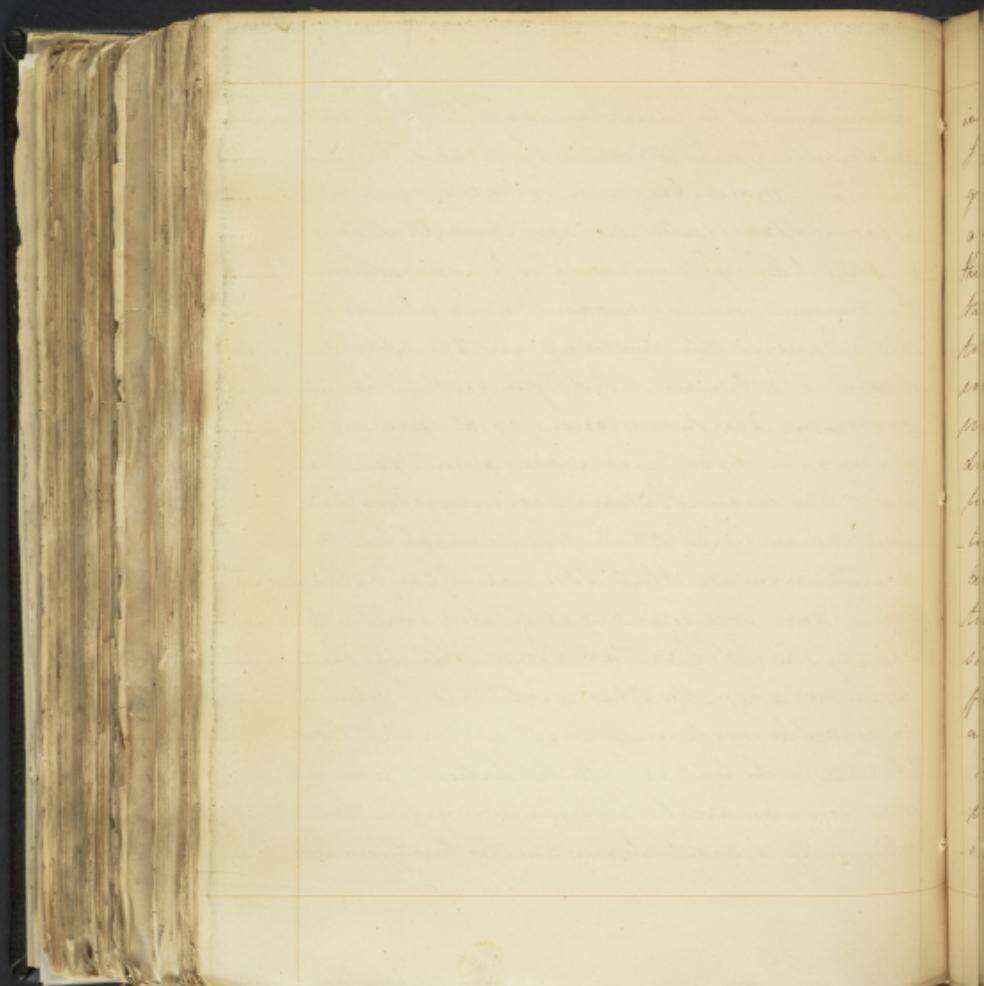
B. a negro girl belonging to my father
now about 21 years of age, was attacked



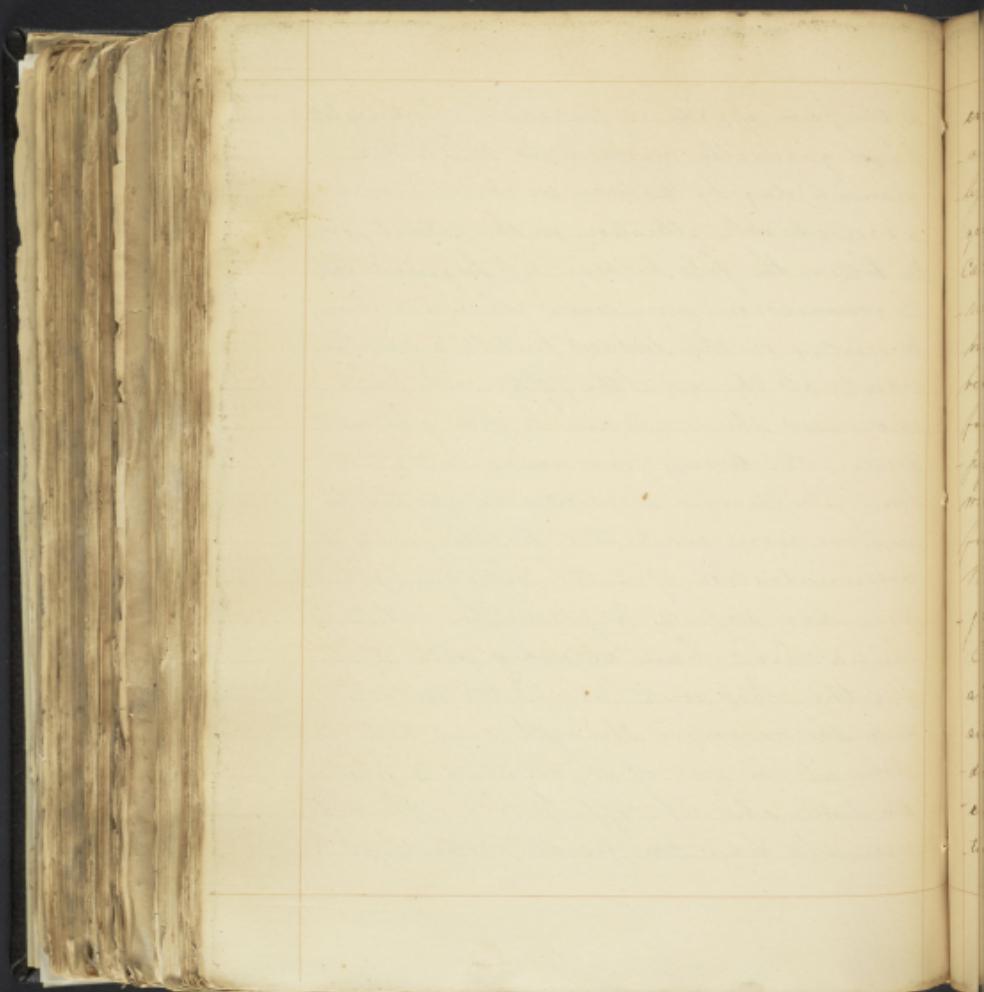
at the age of 12 with an epileptic fit, whilst she was employed in carding, her having been for a long time in a depending posture. The first attack was a very slight one, she was blue and purple, she had no return of fit, until about 2 months afterwards, which was brought on by a suitable exercise whilst at play. From that time until about four years ago they observed a periodical recurrence, from thence they gradually increased both in frequency and violence, and the patient finally became so much exhausted and emaciated, that every one thought death inevitable. My Father (a physician) had given a fair trial to almost every medicine which had been successfully used in the disease, Mercury, Lead Nitrate of silver, zinc, arsenic, and many others which it is useless to mention,



none had the desired effect, the patient gradually grew worse, she became fatigued, her fits more frequent than ever, and appeared to receive no rest except when under the influence of opium. When I returned home from the Lectures of 1818, I found the patient in the above described situation. I determined to try the cuprum ammoniacum as Bellin spoke favourably of it, and seeing somewhere that a Dr. Bill's an Italaw recommended the medicine, and that he scarcely ever failed curing the disease, if the patient often was somewhat debilitated and the disease of the Ida-fallic kind. This was exact by the case with this girl, and I determined to give the medicine a trial, although I thought the case a hopeless one, as the patient's stomach was so very weak. I commenced giving her only half a grain twice in the twenty four hours



in the form of pills, at the end of a fortnight I had gradually increased the dose to three grains a day, by this time we could perceive a considerable alteration in the patient for the better, the fits became less frequent, but the convulsions more severe, which according to writers on the disease generally a salutary event, at the end of the fifth week I had increased the medicine to five grains during the twenty four hours, but at this time producing considerable gastric distress we were compelled to relinquish the administration of it, The patient by this time had perfectly regained her intell^t, she had not been attacked with a fit for the last week, her appetite increases and she recovers strength very rapidly, But at the end of a fortnight from the time she left off taking the medicine she had the most violent fit I



ever saw, I really thought she never would recover from the paroxysm she remained in a senseless and stupor state about eighteen hours but gradually recovered, we then gave her a strong cathartic and commenced the ordinary emetic medicine again and continued it four doses, but her stomach never could be brought to bear more than four grains during the two and a half hours. It was fortunately one of those happy occasions, if I may use the expression, in which the medicine had a peculiar efficacy for the disease. It has now been little less than two years since the patient has enjoyed the blessing of uninterrupted health.

Case 2. P. a boy about ten years of age whilst at play with his schoolfellow was suddenly attacked with an epiphile fit, he was immediately carried home and the family Physician sent for, being of plumbous disposition, he was bled and a cathartic adminis-

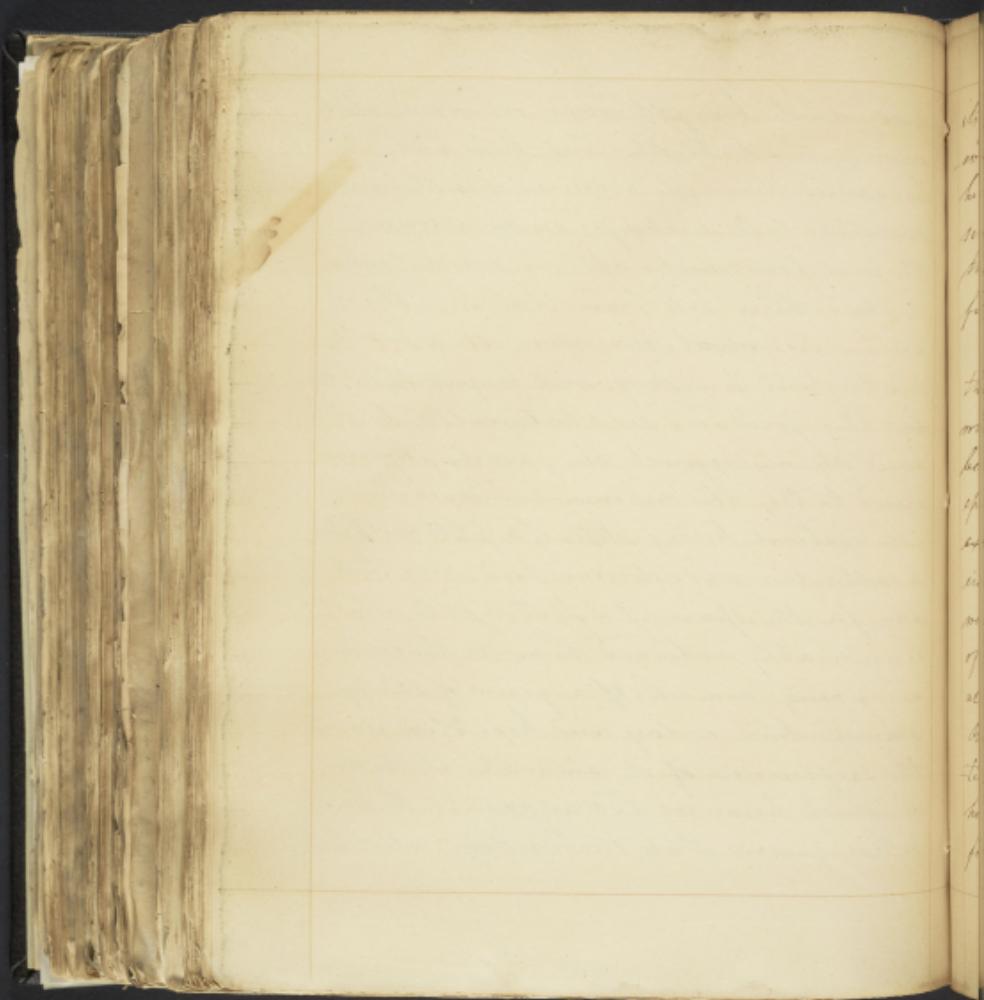
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lived, which brought away one worm, which
was supposed to be the cause of the disease; he
was carried through a course of Anthelmintic
medicines, but discharged no more worms.

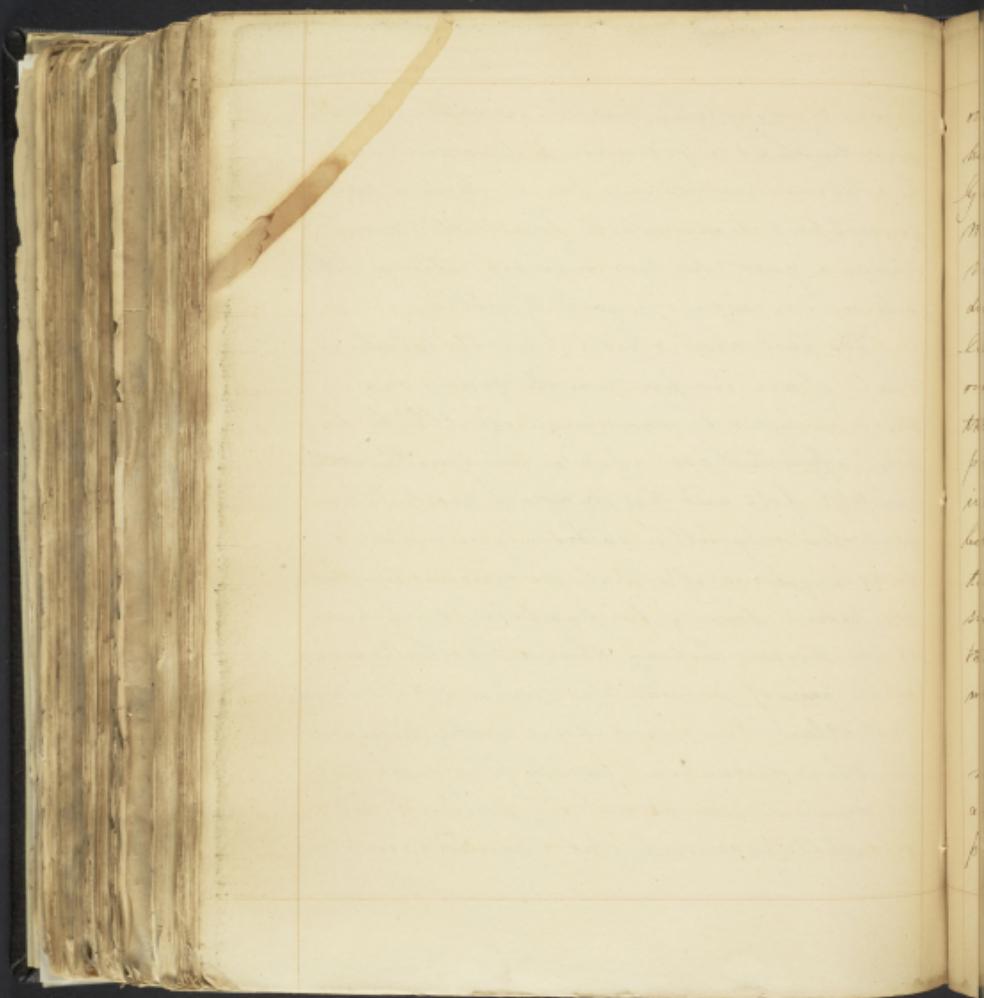
In the first four weeks after he was attacked
he had three fits, from that time they ob-
served a periodical occurrence, once a month;
bleeding and purging were frequently used,
but they produced no abatement of the dis-
ease; at my request the family physician
agreed to try the Cuprum ammoniacum.

The patient being still of a phthomopatic
a cathartic was administered every third
day for the space of a fortnight, which
considerably reduced him; we then com-
menced giving him half a grain of the Cup.
Ammon. twice a day, and kept him under
the influence of it six weeks, at the end
of which time we had augmented the dose
to two grains three times a day, without



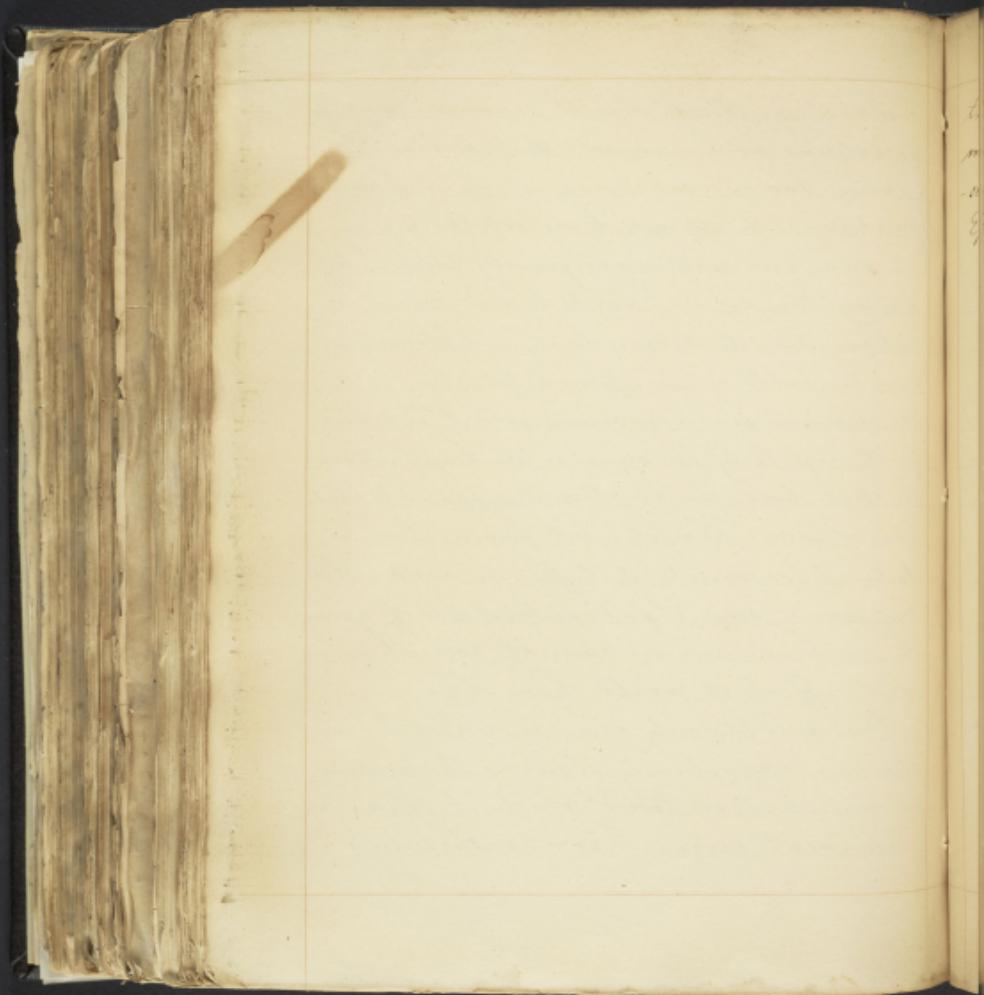
its producing any gastric uneasiness, what-
ever, he had a fit about two weeks after
he commenced taking the medicine, but
since that time, which ^{has} been little more
than a year, he has had no return of the
fits and now enjoys good health.

The last case which I shall relate is
that of an unfortunate young man
who is possessed of immense wealth. He has
been afflicted ever since his youth with
epileptic fits, and his indulgent mother has
exercised very little authority over him,
in consequence of which no decisive measures
were taken during his boyhood to rid him
of the disease, hoping that when he arrived
at the period of puberty, the disease would vanish.
But Alas! they have been sadly disappoin-
ted. He is now about twenty four years of age,
his mind is almost entirely destroyed, his
fits still occur at stated periods, and when



one of them attack him it is several days before he returns to his usual ideation, immediately after the convulsions cease, he is a perfect maniac - he attempts to do all the injury he can, and not unfrequently attempts to destroy the life of his best and dearest relatives, His situation is truly a deplorable one, His mother was prevailed upon to try the cuprum ammonicum, and it ^{was} exhibited pretty regularly for nine or ten days, (and even in that short period it was supposed to have been of some benefit) but forcing him to take it so much disturbed his mother that she, (from a sense of false feeling) left off giving the medicine, and we cannot accurately judge what effect it would have had.

These are the only cases in which I have had an opportunity of seeing the medicine administered, in two of which it effected a permanent cure. I now conclude with



this remark, That, if the medicine was
more generally used and that boldly, Phys-
icians would cease to think Idiopathic
Epilepsy the opprobrious Medicine.

